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MERCANTILISM AND ROME'S FOREIGN POLICY

THE territorial expansion of the Roman Republic has been explained in various ways by the historians of modern times, the explanations usually bearing the tone of the age in which they originate. In conformity to the historical tendencies of the last half-century there has been, since the appearance of Mommsen's history, an ever-increasing emphasis upon economic factors which has reached its climax in the widely read work of Ferrero. These new theories¹ have not grown directly out of a solid body of facts furnished by original ancient sources, though exploiting of course all possible economic data found in classical authorities. They have rather sprung from a consideration of present-day political movements. When critics have objected that modern industrialism has created so many new factors in international politics that it is wholly unsafe to draw *a priori* inferences regarding the ancient situation from modern conditions, the writer of the economic school has been prone to fall back upon seventeenth- and eighteenth-century mercantilism for his parallels. In those centuries, he will say, we find a civilization which was not materially unlike that of Rome in her best days, and he will insist that, even though no publicist existed to write them down for the enlightenment of posterity, he finds certain political practices in the Roman Republic which imply a line of reasoning not unlike that of Davenant and Sir Josiah Child.

Now it would be interesting to compare the economic and political conditions of the Ciceronian period with those of the aggressive European nations of the seventeenth century in an effort to learn whether the causes which led to modern mercantilism were actually in force in Rome. This has not been done, and before it can be done we must confine ourselves more patiently to sifting and comprehending the facts that can be obtained bearing upon the premises of the problem. For this reason I here propose the simple task of examining the ancient references upon which a sort of loose mercantile theory has been erected, and of reviewing the significant facts that we have regarding the extent of Rome's foreign commerce and business during the republic, attempting to determine from this

¹ A typical instance is Mahaffy's judgment: "It was of course the commercial monopolist, and not old Cato and his figs who destroyed Carthage." For the commonly accepted point of view, see Mommsen, *Roman History* (Eng. transl., 1900), III. 238, 274, 295, 415, 421; Colin, *Rome et la Grèce, passim*; Ferrero, *The Greatness and Decline of Rome*, I. 20 ff. and 38; Heitland, *The Roman Republic*, II. 156-157; Speck, *Handelsgeschichte des Altertums, passim*.

investigation when and to what degree commercialism and capitalism became the mainsprings of territorial expansion.

In the first place, we may note that the reasons for assuming an extensive Roman maritime commerce during the early republic do not bear examination. They are usually based upon Livy's statement that in the seventh century B. C. a maritime colony was planted at Ostia to serve as a Roman port, and upon inferences drawn from Rome's early commercial treaties with Carthage. The historian should have been warned by the nature of Ostia's position, its government, and its cults that it could not have been as old as Livy would have it; as a matter of fact, the excavator² is proving that its earliest remains do not date before the third century B. C. Now we know that the Tiber does and did so load its lower course with silt that transmarine merchandise bound for Rome had to be transferred from the larger ships into barges or warehouses at the mouth of the river and for this a well-equipped harbor was necessary. The establishment of a late date for the Ostian port, therefore, compels us to revise our conception of Rome's shipping.

The usual inferences drawn from the Carthaginian treaties³ also need revision. The date and substance of the first treaty are still under dispute, but the second, dating from the latter part of the fourth century B. C., can safely be used. It reads as follows:

There shall be friendship between the Romans and their allies, and the Carthaginians, Tyrians, and township of Utica, on these terms: The Romans shall not maraud, nor traffic, nor found a city east of the Fair Promontory [twenty miles north of Carthage], Mastia, Tarseium. If the Carthaginians take any city in Latium which is not subject to Rome, they may keep the prisoners and the goods, but shall deliver up the town. . . .

In Sardinia and Libya no Roman shall traffic nor found a city; he shall do no more than take in provisions and refit his ship. If a storm drive him upon those coasts, he shall depart within five days.

In the Carthaginian province of Sicily and in Carthage he may transact business and sell whatsoever it is lawful for a citizen to do. In like manner also may a Carthaginian at Rome.

Is it not apparent that the treaty is one-sided, that it secures full privileges for the Punic trader while limiting the Roman, that, in other words, it was drawn up by Carthage, an old trading state, to her own advantage and accepted by the then insignificant Roman

² Taylor, *Cults of Ostia* (Bryn Mawr College Monographs, vol. XI.), introductory chapter.

³ Polybius, III. 22-24. Polybius dates the first treaty at 509, but most historians place it in the fourth century. The second one (III. 24) is probably the one which Diodorus places at 348 B. C. I use Shuckburgh's translation (London, 1889).

state because the latter had little concern in foreign trade? It will not do to object that the very limitations imposed upon the Romans imply that there is Roman trade to limit, for later history shows that the doctrine of *mare clausum* is Carthaginian and not Roman, and Carthage is here applying it against all future contingencies. In short, the treaty should be used as a Punic not a Roman document, even as Penn's treaty with the Indians may be used as evidence for William Penn's theories of human rights but not for those of the Indians. The Carthaginian treaties therefore do not prove the existence of a Roman commerce. They disprove it rather, since it is not reasonable to suppose that the imperious Romans would have signed away an equity in anything they really cared for. We have not so learned Rome! In this connection it will be remembered that Rome showed herself similarly negligent⁴ of trading advantages by promising Tarentum not to sail any Roman ships as far as the Tarentine Gulf.

If further evidence of the fact that the early Romans avoided the seas were needed, there is the additional testimony of archaeology. It has been found, for example, that although the early tombs of the Etruscan towns nearby are store chambers of Oriental and Egyptian wares, Roman tombs⁵ of the same period show no such evidences of extensive trading. The foreign articles found in these Roman tombs were brought by Sicilian and Massaliot passers-by. And this evidence agrees with the fact⁶ so often pointed out that none of the technical naval terms employed by the Romans except those relating to the simplest parts of a small craft are of Latin extraction. They have all been borrowed from the Doric Greek and were picked up from the vocabulary of Sicilian merchants. Apparently the passages in later Roman historians which refer to an early seaport at Ostia and to an extensive commerce are to be attributed to patriotic megalomaniacs who represented the state and pomp of Romulus and King Marcius in terms more appropriate to Augustus's day. Even Ostia remained only a small village throughout the republic. Not till 42 A. D. was the sand-bar in front of the Tiber's mouth dredged and jetties built so that laden seafaring vessels could anchor in still water. In the meantime the most serviceable port of Rome was Puteoli, 150 miles away. Does this imply that shippers had a strong lobby in the Roman senate?

Let us now examine a number of political measures adopted during the last two centuries of the republic which have frequently

⁴ The treaty with Tarentum apparently dates from the latter half of the fourth century B. C.

⁵ *Monumenti Antichi*, vol. XV. (1905).

⁶ Saalfeld, *Italograeca*.

been interpreted as implying the existence of a mercantile policy in the Roman senate, for it is largely upon these that historians have relied in blaming commercialism for deeds like the subjection of Greece, the destruction of Corinth, and the annexation of Carthage.

1. The senate concluded a treaty⁷ with the Aetolians after their subjection in 189 in which the stipulation was made that Romans and Italians should have free entry at the port of Ambracia. It is usual to infer from this sole instance that the senate regularly included a clause in its treaties with subject allies requiring exemption from port dues in order to gain advantages for Roman trade. There are however several specific facts militating against this generalization and none, to my knowledge, favoring it. There are in existence several treaties, including the very important ones with Carthage (201 B. C.), Philip (196 B. C.), and Antiochus (189 B. C.), none of which contain this clause. Egypt quite certainly did not grant any such privilege, for the Ptolemaic system of monopolies would preclude such a practice. The treaty with the Termessians,⁸ 71 B. C., which explicitly grants transit to tax collectors, says nothing of others; and from a passage in Cicero⁹ it is certain that not even the governor of Sicily enjoyed the freedom of the Sicilian port either in Roman cities or in allied towns like Messina and Halaesa. It is safe to say, therefore, that the early treaty with Ambracia contained an exceptional rather than a normal stipulation. Perhaps it was inserted in this particular case to aid the eastern communications of the Latin colony of Brundisium. But even granting that such a stipulation may have been inserted in several other treaties—which one would scarcely deny—it is difficult to understand how it would aid Roman commerce to any appreciable extent, since it would grant the same privileges to the traders of a score of other Italian towns, partly Latin, partly Greek.

2. In Cicero¹⁰ we hear of another peculiar measure which has also been used in support of the view that the senate was swayed by a commercial policy. Some time before 130 B. C. Rome seems to have specified in her dealing with a Transalpine tribe that the latter should refrain from the cultivation of wine and oil. The younger Africanus is represented as saying that the purpose of this measure was to aid the Roman fruit-grower. Modern writers¹¹ have added

⁷ Livy, XXXVIII. 44. The phrase *socii nominis Latini* of course includes all Italian allies (Mommsen, *Staatsrecht*, III. 661). *Ac* is understood. The inferences usually drawn from this passage are found in Mommsen, *Staatsrecht*, III. 691.

⁸ Bruns, *Fontes*, p. 94.

⁹ Cicero, *Verr.*, II. 185.

¹⁰ *De Rep.*, III. 16.

¹¹ Mommsen's view of this passage, expressed in *Roman History*, III. 415, is usually adopted, but Polybius, XXXIII. 11, says that the Gauls gave their hostages

that it would also aid the Roman carrier. Now, before 130, a Roman army had fought battles in Transalpine Gaul only once and that was at the request of Rome's most loyal ally, Marseilles. When the war had been successfully ended and a treaty signed—the terms of which were naturally dictated by Marseilles—the Romans withdrew. Marseilles was a wine-growing state, and if a market for wine was created in Gaul, she naturally profitted. A copy of the treaty was of course carried to Rome, since her legions had secured the victory, and its purpose may well have been misunderstood by later Romans, but we need not doubt that Marseilles and the Gauls were the real contracting parties. Had the Romans intended to create a market for their own produce by legislation, why did they never pass measures affecting Spain, Greece, Africa, and Asia, which were actual rivals in such products?

3. The clause¹² in the Macedonian constitutions of 167 forbidding the importation of salt and the exportation of timber has also no reference to Roman commerce. We know from several sources¹³ that the Macedonian kings had regularly supported a timber monopoly, forbidding all exportation without special consent. Apparently the chief forests, like the mines, were crown lands. Now, when Rome fell heir to these royal forests and mines in 167, the senate was not at once ready to decide what final disposition to make of them. It hesitated to take full possession and place state contractors in charge, since their presence, as a visible indication of overlordship, would cause undue trouble.¹⁴ It therefore permitted the Macedonian contractors to work the iron and copper mines at half the former revenue, closed the other mines for the time being, and simply—also for the time being—re-enacted the old royal prohibition on the exportation of timber. In 158, it sent state contractors to open and work the closed mines, and probably at the same time leased the royal timber lands. These lands may well be

to Marseilles, not to Rome. Speck (*Handelsgeschichte*) enumerates similar prohibitions that are mentioned in the late imperial codices, but they cannot be used as evidence for the republic. Neither should he use the testimony of the Plautine comedy which is translated from the Greek. Rome's temporary prohibition of interstate trade in Macedonia and Achaëa was imposed in order to break up political unity. As soon as this purpose was accomplished the prohibition was withdrawn. This old practice never had an economic purpose.

¹² Livy, XLV. 29. Niese, *Geschichte der Griechischen und Makedonischen Staaten*, III. 181, says: "Der Sinn dieser Bestimmung ist unklar." Heitland, II. 120, "Perhaps it in some way favoured operations of Roman capitalists." Speck has no doubts about the purpose of the prohibition, vol. III., pt. 2, p. 349.

¹³ Diodorus, XX. 46; Andocides, *Return*, 11.

¹⁴ This is the meaning of Livy's original, which he, in the spirit of his own time, puts thus (XLV. 18): "Ubi publicanus esset, ibi . . . libertatem socii nullam esse."

the *agri regii* mentioned as a part of Rome's property by Cicero¹⁵ in 63. The provision against the importation of salt can, in the light of this, only mean that the senate found a royal monopoly of salt also, and, in behalf of the Macedonian state treasuries, re-established the monopoly and gave it over to the new states. The senate then protected its gift by continuing the stipulation against imports. To be sure, we have no direct reference to a previous monopoly in salt in Macedonia, but the assumption that there was one seems justifiable, since we know that all the other Hellenic powers¹⁶ which succeeded Alexander established such monopolies.

4. There is one more regulation which bears, in the view of some authorities, the earmarks of mercantilism. From the fact that Rhodes asked the senate's permission to buy grain in Sicily, we are probably safe in drawing the inference that the senate somehow controlled the Sicilian grain market. Was this supervision undertaken so as to control the import that might flood the markets needed by Roman landlords, or was it undertaken in order to secure shipping for Roman merchants? Both suggestions have been made, but neither is in accord with the senatorial policy of this time. The real purpose of this supervision was political, not commercial, and is best illustrated by Hellenic precedents. When we remember that Rome, when hard pressed for food during the Hannibalic war, was compelled to ask Ptolemy's permission before corn could be bought in Egypt, we can understand where the senate found its precedent and why it adopted the regulation. Ptolemy¹⁷ had accumulated great stores of corn from his tribute and was therefore able by controlling the Egyptian markets not only to secure a market for the royal stores but also to gain a certain amount of political prestige through his power to aid friends and injure enemies. From an inscription we may infer that the Seleucids in Syria pursued the same policy, and we have recently learned that the little republic of Samos bought for public use the semi-public temple-tithes of their island. Of all these practices the senate doubtless had heard, and of others besides concerning which we now know nothing. It could see that a real political power lay in so controlling the corn market that the purchaser must ask the sovereign's permission to buy. It could see that corn production was dwindling in Italy and that the state might be made helpless in times of war unless, like the eastern monarchs, it could control a surplus. In the East the control had

¹⁵ *Leg. Agr.*, I. 5.

¹⁶ See Rostowzew, "Staatspacht", *Philologus*, Suppl. 9, p. 411.

¹⁷ On Egypt see Rostowzew in Pauly-Wissowa, *Reallex.*, s. v. "Frumentum", VII. 139; on Syria, Köhler, *Sitz. Akad. Berlin*, 1898, p. 841. The Samian decree is discussed by Wilamowitz in *Sitz. Akad. Berlin*. 1904, p. 917.

been established partly for the personal profit of the king; when the practice was adopted at Rome, it served a political purpose only, for the state never attempted to sell its grain at a profit.

The tendency to find in this corn regulation a device of the senatorial landlords to protect their own grain market seems to rest upon Mommsen's version of the history of Roman agriculture.¹⁸ It was Mommsen's contention that the influx of cheap slave-raised corn from Sicily after the acquisition of that province ruined the market for the Latin farmer and forced him to abandon grain-raising and turn to wine and oil culture and grazing. It is true of course that the change in the character of agriculture began to be noticeable soon after the acquisition of the first provinces, but if we follow Mommsen's *propter hoc* literally we shall fail to grasp the real meaning of the change. The fact is that wheat was not and never will be economically the best crop for Latium. Before Rome had become well connected by commerce with foreign parts, it was naturally dependent upon Latian produce. Its great need was wheat of course, and the urban population had to pay the price that would induce cultivation of this cereal. But the land was really better adapted to other things. The vine would thrive excellently in the rich volcanic soil of the Alban hills and on the lower slopes of the Sabine mountains, while the olive could grow where it was too dry for the vine. In favorable localities these crops were sure to displace wheat as soon as the city was ready for a more luxurious diet and the need for wheat could be satisfied from elsewhere. Grazing, similarly, was bound to displace wheat-raising upon the plains. The Latian plain is a gently rolling country with a subsoil of tufa. This tufa does not erode readily enough to make a thick soil, so that when the sod is stripped for agriculture the top soil washes off in the winter rains at a more rapid rate than the tufa beneath will break up. Sod alone can stem this erosion. Hence the land will preserve its value when used as grazing ground, whereas it will not when used for agriculture. But even in those spots where the land is level enough to prevent this erosion, there is a dearth of rain after the middle of June, and the nonconformity of the uneven volcanic plain to the spring-bearing hills beyond makes irrigation impracticable. At best therefore the soil will yield the farmer only the moderate crop that can grow in the short spring season. The grazer, however, is not reduced to the profits of so short a season. For eight months grass will grow for his flocks, and during the dry season he can find cheap mountain pastures in the Sabine hills near-by. We do not believe therefore that the peasant was driven to the wall because

¹⁸ Mommsen, *Roman History* (Eng. transl.), III. 79.

the senate flooded the market with its Sicilian tithe-corn. Rather, when ships could bring to the Roman grain market corn from land adapted to its raising, the Roman peasant was released, as it were, from an ever-deteriorating corn-culture and could then specialize upon the products for which his soil was more fitted. To be sure, the change probably caught some conservative farmers off their guard, and it unfortunately worked for the plantation system to the detriment of intensive farming, but the same results would eventually have been effected by the freer commerce of the growing state even if the senate had not secured its annual 750,000 bushels of tithe-corn for the home market.

If we thus grasp the economic situation of Latium we shall not find it difficult to understand the Sicilian corn regulation. In deciding to control Sicilian corn, the landlord senators were neither generously benefitting the populace to the ruining of their own market, nor were they diabolically devising some scheme for getting rid of the Sicilian grain or for enriching Roman shippers. They adopted the Ptolemaic policy on purely political grounds and they could do so without jeopardizing Roman interests, for they had already discovered profitable substitutes for their own corn crops.

We have now reviewed all the evidence that can be cited in favor of commercial influences in republican politics. In the several treaties of the early part of the second century we find that there is no special privilege for the Roman trader. The treaty with Antiochus safeguards the commercial privileges of the Rhodians but asks nothing more. In 167 the royal monopoly of salt is confirmed to the Macedonian republics. In 154 Marseilles was able by the aid of Roman support to free her wine market from the competition of a hostile Gallic tribe. Rome guaranteed the strength of the treaty by her signature, but the wording of it was dictated by the Greek city. The Aetolian treaty is the only one in which special commercial privileges were exacted, and these were accorded to the numerous Italian rivals of Rome as fully as to the Roman traders. On the other hand, the Termessian treaty and the Sicilian regulations mentioned by Cicero sustain the view that Rome seldom asked subject-allies for the freedom of the port in behalf of her merchants.

Supporting this positive evidence, there is the solid authority of the republic's failure to adopt a number of measures that might effectively have aided her merchants if she had desired to favor them. We hear of no *mare clausum* as in the treaties exacted by Carthage, no export and import prohibitions regarding Italy as in the occasional enactments of Athens, no differential tariffs such as appear during the empire, no creation of new commercial monopolies

such as were practised in the Hellenic world, no direct encouragement of harbor improvements by subsidies and insurances such as the emperor Claudius later introduced. In view of these facts the historian can hardly continue to hand on the conventional statements that the commercial lobby of Rome directed the foreign policies of the senate in the second century B. C., much less that it secured the destruction of Corinth and Carthage.

When Carthage fell no Roman harbor was provided in Africa. Utica, a free city, inherited Carthage's commerce, and even handled the produce of the Italian farmers who settled in Africa. When Corinth was destroyed, the Delian harbor profitted to be sure, but, as we shall presently see, Delos was a port already filled with Greek, Syrian, Egyptian, and South-Italian merchants, and these enjoyed the full privileges of the port as much as did the Romans. Caesar was the first Roman statesman who formed comprehensive plans to further Roman commerce; but, as he fell before these plans could be executed, the task had to await the patronage of Claudius. Then first can one speak of state encouragement of commerce at Rome.

The supposed mercantilism of the last two centuries of the republic thus disappears under examination. Apparently the state was not greatly interested in foreign trade. Can we determine the extent and importance of this trade? There is no ancient estimate now in existence, and yet we are not left wholly to conjecture. The best indications are to be found in the recently excavated inscriptions of the famous island-city of Delos. Since the city was never rebuilt after its destruction by Mithradates in 88, its numerous inscriptions have lain undisturbed in the ruins until the present day; and since Strabo informs us that it was the centre of the Roman foreign trade during the republic, we may in some measure restore the history of that commerce from these inscriptions.

Now, these inscriptions¹⁹ at once prove that the Romans were late comers at Delos, that in fact they were not at all a vital element in the Aegean trade during the days when the Roman state was spreading its political influence through the East. During that period the mercantile associations of the Orient predominate at Delos.

¹⁹ These inscriptions are now being published by French scholars in vol. XI. of *Inscriptiones Graecae*. Meanwhile one must consult the *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum* and the current numbers of the *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique*. See also article on Delos in Pauly-Wissowa, and Homolle, "Les Romains à Délos", *Bull. Corr. Hell.*, VIII. 75-158 (1884). Homolle has placed the immigration of Roman merchants too early. He has not given due weight to the fact that the earliest Roman names are those of officials connected with navies and armies, and that the other western names of early date are not Roman but South-Italian. Furthermore, he dates several inscriptions too early; they should be checked up by Ferguson's latest list of archons (*Klio*, VII. 216, 1907).

Syrian cults had entered the island early in the second century²⁰ and Syrian mercantile societies erected dedications there from 160 on. *CIG.* 2271 is a decree of the "synod of Tyrian merchants" dating from 153, and Roussel²¹ gives a collection of inscriptions of the merchants' association (Poseidonists) of Beirut, Syria, from the second half of the century. Egyptians entered Delos even earlier. Temples to their deities existed there in the third century, and their inscriptions, some of which go back to the third century,²² have come to light by the score. In the latter half of the second century, when Alexandrian merchantmen came in even greater numbers, new temples were raised to Egyptian gods.²³ Other tablets recording honors and gifts show an influx of easterners from a dozen different cities soon after Delos was made a free port in 167. The cities most frequently mentioned are Alexandria, Antioch, Tyre, Sidon, Beirut, Aradus, Ascalon, Laodicea, Heracleia, and other cities of the Pontic sea. It is the peoples from these places who gained most when in 167 Rome declared Delos a free port and in 146 Corinth fell.

Westerners, however, are by no means absent. In fact before the end of the second century, they seem to predominate. Let us see what the inscriptions have to say about who these westerners were and when they came. It will be remembered that the Roman fleet frequently harbored at Delos during the wars with Philip and Antiochus. That fleet was largely officered and manned by the people of South-Italian cities who were the "naval allies" of Rome. Perhaps this accounts for the fact that almost all the Italian names that occur in the Delian inscriptions before 150 are South-Italian. In a list of the year 180²⁴ Vibius and Oppius are Oscan names, Staius is from Cumae. The only other early list,²⁵ dating from about the same time, records the names Oppius, Staius, Vicirius, Plotius, Sehius, and Claudius. Apparently the last name alone is Roman, and even that is the name of a freedman. Sestius²⁶ (before 167) is explicitly designated as a native of Fregellae, Avillius²⁷ is a native of Lanuvium, and Trebius Loisius²⁸ is now known to be a Sicilian.²⁹

²⁰ *BCH.*, VI. 295 (1882).

²¹ *Ibid.*, XXXI. 335-377 (1907).

²² *Ibid.*, XXXII. 397 (1908).

²³ Ferguson, *Klio*, VII. 226 (1907).

²⁴ *BCH.*, VI. 29 (1882).

²⁵ *CIL.*, III. 7218.

²⁶ *BCH.*, VIII. 89 (1884).

²⁷ *CIL.*, III. 7242.

²⁸ *BCH.*, IV. 183 (1880).

²⁹ Dessau, *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, 5370.

These Italians may possibly have formed a club or *conventus*³⁰ even before Delos became a free port, since an inscription³¹ attesting communal worship seems to date from about 180. When it was that Roman citizens began to predominate in this club we do not know. We cannot draw conclusions from inscriptions like that of the *BCH.*, V. 463 (1881), dating from about the middle of the century, where the members are called "Romans". This tablet was raised in honor of an Athenian officer; and, since Athens had received Delos from Rome, Athenian official inscriptions regularly speak of the members of the *conventus* as Romans, not as *Itali* or *Italici*, which was the designation used by the members of themselves. Actual names of Roman merchants are extremely rare until after Asia had become a Roman possession in 132, and Delos could in consequence be used as a convenient way-station between Pergamum and Rome. From that time on Roman societies grow numerous. A temple was then erected to Mercury. A society calling itself by the high-sounding title "Hermaistes, Apolloniastes, Poseidoniastes", was formed about 113.³² A little later Roman traders built the so-called *Schola Romanorum*, a club-house which was then the largest building on the island. About 100, Roman freedmen and slaves formed a society for the worship of the *lares compitales*, and have left a generous record of their piety. In 88 there were enough Romans in Delos to influence the policy of the island, for it refused to follow the example of Athens by joining Mithradates against Rome, thereby bringing upon itself the king's wrath.

This brief survey of the Delian records justifies the inference that strictly Roman commerce was of little importance in the Aegean before 132 B. C., when Asia was made a province. Incidentally it proves that the Roman trader could have had no privileges which were not accorded the traders of Cumae, Naples, Tarentum, and a score of other Italian seaport towns; for, had the Romans enjoyed special commercial privileges, a diversity of interests would have precluded the existence of a common *conventus*. It certainly confutes the old hypothesis that in ordering the destruction of Corinth in 146 the Roman government was consciously influenced by the merchants and capitalists interested in the trade that centred about Delos.

³⁰ On the *conventus* of Italians and Romans in foreign parts see Schulten, *De Conventibus Civium Romanorum*, and Kornemann's article "Conventus" in Pauly-Wissowa.

³¹ *CIL.*, III. 7218. It is usually dated early because two of the names seem to be identical with names occurring on Demares's list of 180. It is still a moot question whether an organized cult implies the existence of a *conventus* of the usual kind.

³² *BCH.*, XXXIII. 493 (1909).

Other evidence regarding Rome's foreign trade also supports the contention that it grew up after the days of expansion. Recent excavations prove that the natural harbor of Rome at the Tiber's mouth was still a very small town in Caesar's day. Livy's accounts³³ of the mercantile docks built at Rome in 192 and 174 show them to be only unimportant structures. During the age of the elder Cato, to be sure, there are many references to imports of all kinds, for the wealthier classes were beginning to enjoy eastern wines and table luxuries, finer weaves of cloth, and decorative articles. Sicilian grain and hordes of slaves were also shipped in. Cato even makes reference to the profits that would accrue from judicious investments in the shipping business. That, however, this shipping business was to any great extent in the hands of Romans is very unlikely, for Rome's export trade at the time was insignificant. Roman industry manufactured nothing during the century of Cato that could compete across the seas with the more finished products of Greece and the Orient, while Roman wine and oil, which later were marketed far and wide, had not yet established a reputation abroad.

In the beginning of the last century of the republic references to Roman traders busy in foreign parts become more numerous. In 88, that is, forty years after the province had been formed, agents of Mithradates found eighty thousand Romans and Italians in Asia. This number of course includes tax-gatherers and farmers of the state lands as well as merchants, bankers, and their servants. Sallust tells us that many Romans were engaged in business in Numidia at the end of the second century B. C. and Cicero³⁴ says that in the first decades of the first century B. C. most of the trading in Gaul was carried on by Romans. To this evidence we may add the inscriptional reference³⁵ to a club of *Italici* at Argos which bears the date 69 B. C., and a similar inscription found in Beroea, Macedonia, dating from 57 B. C.

Contrasting with the increasing number of references to Romans engaged in foreign business there is the distressing record of the state's neglect to keep the seas clear of pirates. Rhodes had formerly policed the eastern seas to protect her commerce but found herself unable to bear this burden after the loss of her independence. Piracy flourished disgracefully at the end of the second century B. C. and the senate then made a half-hearted effort to suppress it. This work, however, was not thoroughly done until the year 67, when

³³ Livy, XXXV. 10; XLI. 27. See Jordan, *Topographie der Stadt Rom in Alterthum*, III. 173.

³⁴ Val. Max., IX. 2, 3; Sallust, *Jugurtha*, 40; Cicero, *Pro Fonteio*, 19.

³⁵ Kornemann, Pauly-Wissowa, article "Conventus".

Pompey was assigned to the task. Meanwhile even the Roman port of Ostia had been sacked by these eastern buccaneers. One can hardly understand this remissness except upon the assumption that the traders in the provinces were looked upon at home as a somewhat low class of adventurers who had little connection with the vital interests of the state, and it is certainly incorrect in view of the slight attention paid to this most pressing of their needs to suppose that they exerted any considerable influence upon the policies of the senate.

If one is inclined to wonder why trade was slow to "follow the flag" during the century of growing political prestige, a reference to census statistics may be of interest. The following record of citizens is taken from Livy, the estimate of acreage of purely Roman territory from Beloch's³⁶ careful reckoning:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Citizens</i>	<i>Acreage</i>
203 B. C.	214,000	6,700,000
193	243,000	9,200,000
173	269,000	13,700,000
168	312,000	"
163	337,000	"
153	324,000	"
141	327,000	"
135	317,000	"

It will be seen that in the thirty years after Zama the number of citizens increased only twenty-five per cent. while the Roman acreage in Italy increased over one hundred per cent. Whence could the capital have come in the poverty-stricken state to develop this enormous increase of land? We know now that neither sufficient men nor funds were forthcoming. The first increase of about 2,500,000 acres resulted from the state's appropriation of the South-Italian country which had been so thoroughly devastated by the last years of the war. Along the coast of this territory the state planted a string of small citizen-colonies as a military measure when an invasion by Antiochus seemed imminent. But outside of this strip

³⁶ *Italische Bund* (1880), and *Bevölkerung der Griech.-Röm. Welt* (1886). The hectare = almost 2½ acres; the acre is a trifle over 1½ jugera.

The decrease in population between 160 and 130 is partly due to a new standard of living that accompanied the influx of wealth and Greek ideas, and partly to the fact that after the public lands had been occupied, the small farmer who was giving way to the plantation owner did not attempt to pre-empt a new homestead but sought his fortune in the provinces. With the Gracchan reallotments the census figures took a decided bound upwards again.

little was done in the south. The north needed more immediate development. Along the Po the state was busy punishing Gallic tribes that had aided Hannibal. As fast as the offenders were pacified or driven out it was necessary to plant citizen-colonies in order to assure permanent success. The lands of the north were far richer and more inviting to settlers than those of the south and they could not easily be held unless colonized. We cannot doubt that for thirty years all the available capital and colonists were sent northward. What became of the southern public lands we may infer from the agrarian legislation proposed by the Gracchi later. Since the state could find no buyers or renters for them, she simply permitted chance squatters and ranchers to use them, asked no uncomfortable questions, and even neglected the records. Some cattle-grazers who had gone through the formality of leasing the five hundred jugera allowed by law gradually increased their holdings when they discovered that the adjacent lands were still unoccupied. It will be remembered how in Gracchan days the descendants of these same squatters were compelled to surrender the surplusage despite their appeal to vested rights, and how the democrats who then wanted lands for colonization could not understand why the senate had ever pursued so reckless a policy as to disregard the state's titles to its public lands. The explanation, of course, lies in the fact that from 200 to about 160 the land market was so enormously glutted that the senate saw no reason for asserting its titles. From this it will be readily understood why with all the available capital thus invested in lands for at least half a century after the Punic War there was so little at hand for commerce. In fact it is generally true that Rome's rapid territorial expansion throughout the republican period constantly opened up a market for real-estate investments in advance of capitalistic needs and as constantly attracted Roman capital away from industry and commerce.

It is interesting to note that at the end of the republican period when the Mediterranean commerce finally began to be concentrated in the hands of Roman citizens, these citizen-tradesmen were chiefly of foreign extraction, not members of the old Roman stock. Very many of them bear Greek and Graeco-Syrian *cognomina*, which means that ex-slaves and their sons had become the merchants of Rome.³⁷ The explanation of this fact is not far to seek. We know that the enormous loss of life throughout Italy during the Hannibalic war depleted both shop and farm to such an extent that a great many eastern slaves were imported to work the industrial machinery of Italy. When later the exploitation of provincial resources invited

³⁷ Parvan, *Die Nationalität der Kaufleute* (1909).

thousands of Roman citizens to emigrate, the economic vacuum was again filled by new importations of slaves. These clever easterners were employed by their masters in all kinds of lucrative occupations at which the slaves might make their own profits.³⁸ They were placed in bake-shops, shoe-shops, and wine-booths, in the stalls of the vegetable and the fish markets. There was nothing they could not do. It is not surprising to find that a thrifty slave could save enough to buy his liberty in eight years. Slaves in personal service were frequently set free by generous owners who put them into business and shared profits with them on a partnership basis. These are the people who were handling Rome's merchandise at the seaports of Italy. They came originally from trading and seafaring people. Thrift, cleverness, and fidelity were the qualities which gained them their liberty and these were the same qualities which soon turned them into successful merchants and ship-owners. They had little difficulty in outstripping the Romans in these occupations, for the Roman was always a landlubber. In the late empire the only rivals with whom they disputed the traffic of the seas were the descendants of their own ancestors, the Syrians of the east.³⁹

In reviewing the status of Roman commerce during the last two centuries of the republic, then, we have found that at first the Italians who lived near the Greek seaport towns of southern Italy were actively engaged in the Mediterranean trade. Roman citizens gained importance there only after 130, when they began to exploit their new province of Asia. These citizens, however, always lovers of terra firma, gradually drifted into capitalistic enterprises on land, leaving the freedmen of Oriental and Greek stock in Italy and their sons to gain control of the maritime shipping. In the light of these facts we can readily comprehend the attitude of indifference that the senate regularly assumed toward commerce.

Thus far we have dealt only with the commercial classes that were concerned in carrying Rome's imports and exports. Quite apart from these, there grew up a strong group of capitalistic firms that acted indirectly as the state's agents in many of its financial transactions. These were the associations of *publicani*, whose members were usually *equites*, the nobility of wealth at Rome. Because of its theory of magistracies, Rome could not well create a permanent treasury department capable of collecting all the state revenues and directing the execution of public works; accordingly, it had to let contracts to firms of private citizens for the performance of all such tasks. Obviously the firms that thrived upon these works were

³⁸ Marquardt, *Das Privatleben der Römer*, p. 164.

³⁹ Scheffer-Boichorst, *Zur Geschichte der Syrer im Abendlande*.

directly interested in the size of Rome's revenues and disbursements, and accordingly in the growth of the empire that necessarily increased the profitable operations of the firms concerned. The question arises whether this interest converted itself into an effort to influence the state in favor of expansion, and if so at what period. I shall not here discuss the entire question but shall only record some calculations in justification of my belief that this influence did not appear during the second century B. C., where historians⁴⁰ have usually placed it, but rather during the first.

The *locus classicus* for this discussion is a passage in Polybius's description of the Roman constitution which was written about 140 B. C.:⁴¹

In like manner the people on its part is far from being independent of the Senate, and is bound to take its wishes into account both collectively and individually. For contracts, too numerous to count, are given out by the censors in all parts of Italy for the repairs or construction of public buildings; there is also the collection of revenue from many rivers, harbors, gardens, mines, and land—everything,⁴² in a word, that comes under the control of the Roman government: and in all these the people⁴³ at large are engaged; so that there is scarcely a man, so to speak, who is not interested either as a contractor or as being employed in the works. For some purchase the contracts from the censors themselves; and others go partners with them; while others again go security for these contractors, or actually pledge their property to the treasury for them. Now over all these transactions the Senate has absolute control. It can grant an extension of time; and in case of unforeseen accident can relieve the contractors from a portion of their obligation, or release them from it altogether, if they are absolutely unable to fulfil it.

Polybius might have added that all these joint-stock companies also issued shares of stock as modern corporations do, so that their influence was increased by the expectation of dividends. Obviously a corporation supported by a large number of stock-holders, doubt-

⁴⁰ See especially Heitland's index under "Capitalists, influence of, on Roman policy", with his forty-one references; Deloume, *Les Manieurs d'Argent à Rome, passim*; Greenidge, *A History of Rome*, pp. 44 ff.; Ferrero, *passim*; et al. Most writers have exaggerated the influence of the capitalist of the second century.

⁴¹ Polybius, VI. 17.

⁴² This is of course not quite correct. The tributes and tithes of Sicily, Spain, Sardinia, Macedonia, and Africa were collected by the natives in various ways and paid directly to the treasury.

⁴³ Here again Polybius is misleading. In the public works the firms employed little free labor. Slaves did most of the work and they of course had no political influence. We should also note that the most extensive piece of work in the days of Polybius, the great Marcian aqueduct, was not let out to these firms. The aediles took charge of the work and assigned it in some 3000 small lots to individuals. It would seem that the regular contracting firms were not capable of handling so large a task.

less including many senators, might exert a very appreciable influence upon legislation. Polybius also points out the strong hold which the senate had upon the public by its power to control contracts. Without belittling the importance of these facts, one must nevertheless indicate the inadequacy of the historian as a witness in the matter. Polybius left his native Greek village at a time when the wealthiest man in Greece was not worth \$300,000 and when the state budgets of the several Greek states were mere bagatelles. Nothing so astonished him at Rome as the sums of money dealt with there. Rome's budget—in his day about \$5,000,000—now seems a trifle for a world-state, but to him it was enormous, and it is not surprising that he should have over-emphasized the importance of the state's operations. Moreover, Polybius in this passage is developing his favorite political philosophy that the ideal constitution is composed of a system of "checks and balances". He is attempting to prove that Rome's great success is due to her possession of a Polybian constitution and he accordingly strains his material to fit his system. To make the three sides of his triangle exert an even pull, not only must the consuls check the senate, but the senate must check the people. It is very doubtful, however, whether anyone unacquainted with Polybius's theory of this endless chain of control would have discovered the enormous dependence of the people on the senate that so impressed him.

As a safer indication of the amount of influence exerted by capital and its interests, let us try to measure the extent of the operations in which it was engaged. Before the Punic Wars *publicani* were needed at Rome for the collection of port and pasture dues and perhaps of the rent of public lands when there were any. The citizen-tribute was apparently paid to the treasury without intermediary. In those days *publicani* were necessary to the state but they had no control over any large funds. The conquest of Sicily extended their field of operation to the collection of port and pasture dues upon the island, but it is noteworthy that they made little or no effort to bid for the tithe-gathering there. In 214, during the Hannibalic war, they were publicly asked to supply—on credit—provisions for the army in Spain. Nineteen publicans, members of three firms, responded to this request, making the condition that the state insure their cargoes.⁴⁴ Later several firms offered to execute on credit the public works that would be needed until the war should end.⁴⁵ These are the first references we possess to firms of publi-

⁴⁴ Livy, XXIII. 49, 3.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, XXIV. 18.

cans. After the war we do not often hear of them, although we know that expensive public works were occasionally let.

In order to form an estimate of the amount involved in the annual operations of these firms we must try to determine what part of the annual budget passed through their hands in dues and contracts. In the year 63 B. C. we hear that the treasury had an income⁴⁶ of about \$10,000,000. In 150 B. C. we may fairly estimate it at half of that or less, since the state had not then acquired its most profitable provinces of Asia and Africa nor the tribute of several Greek cities which became stipendiary during the Mithradatic War. Of this hypothetical \$5,000,000, the Roman publicans did not collect half, for the Spanish, the Sardinian, and the Macedonian stipends were paid directly, while the Sicilian tithes were still gathered by native collectors. There probably passed through the hands of the publicans at this time in port and pasture dues, fishing licenses, and occasional mining contracts an average of about \$2,000,000 per annum. Furthermore some of the firms also engaged in public works, road-building, the construction of walls, sewers, aqueducts, and the like. For such matters the senate of the second century usually appropriated a fifth⁴⁷ or a tenth of the year's income, that is, from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000. In the rest of the expenditure—practically all for military purposes—the publicans seldom had any share, for the military questor usually managed the finances of the army, receiving the requisite appropriation directly from the treasury.

We may safely conclude therefore that the annual sum in the hands of the *publicani* both for collections and contracts did not on the average exceed \$4,000,000. What profits could be made from this sum that they should influence the state's policies? If we estimate⁴⁸ that there were about 20,000 *equites* in the year 150, with an average census of \$20,000 each—a low estimate—we have a private

⁴⁶ This figure is assured by a combination of Plutarch, *Pompey*, 45, and Cicero, *Pro Sestio*, 55. Ptolemy's income from Egypt about the same time was about three-fourths this sum (Diodorus, XVII. 52). For the sake of comparison we may note that the Gallic tribute was about \$2,000,000 under Augustus, that of Asia about \$1,500,000 under Hadrian. Sicily's tithe in 70 B. C. was worth about \$450,000, if we accept from Cicero, *Verr.*, III. 163, the average price of three sesterces per modius of wheat or about sixty cents per bushel.

⁴⁷ Marquardt, *Staatsverwaltung*, II. 87.

⁴⁸ The knight's minimum census was doubtless lower in 150 than the 400,000 HS. required by law in the first century. But our estimate is hardly too high for an average. Crassus, the consul of 130, considered the richest man of his day, was worth 100,000,000 HS. I have also estimated the number of knights. In the census of 234, there were 19,000 Roman knights in a citizen-population of 270,000. Since the citizen-census of 153 showed a population of 324,000, our number is probably fair.

capital of \$400,000,000 in the hands of the *equites* alone. In other words, the public contracts at that time involved only one per cent. of the possessions of the *equites*. Probably ninety-nine per cent. was invested in Italian land. The total area of Roman lands at this time was about 14,000,000 acres, which at the average price of unimproved lands given by Columella⁴⁹ (fifty dollars per jugera) would mean a thousand million dollars in soil value alone. It must be evident that throughout the middle of the century the one all-absorbing field for investment was Italian land and that in proportion to the amount devoted to this field the capital engaged in state contracts before the Gracchan legislation was insignificant. Had the tax-farming firms been looking for a more extended field of operation, they could readily have competed for the collection of Sicilian tithes, and the slight inconvenience of employing an agent in Sicily would scarcely have deterred them from doing so if they had been very eager for such state contracts. We must conclude therefore that before the Gracchan period the *equites* were hardly so deeply involved in public finances as to be seriously concerned about the problem of territorial expansion. The attempt so persistently made to explain second-century wars by reference to the supposed machinations of the knights has no foundation in our sources or in any accurate understanding of the knights' position in the economic world of that day.

It cannot be denied, however, that the knights did become a strong political power in the first century, and it was the Gracchan revenue law of 123 which opened the way for their ultimate high position. This law gave them contracts which at once doubled the amount of their operations for the state. But what benefitted them even more were the incidental profits derived from these new contracts. After collecting the Asiatic grain, for example, they could hold it for winter prices and thus double their gains. They could carry the taxes of delinquent cities at usurious rates of interest. Individuals engaged in these operations in Asia found rich opportunities for investing in lands and industries. And the lessons they learned in Asia they applied elsewhere. Not only did they now enter the Sicilian field of tithe-gathering, but individual investors connected with the public firms overran all the provinces in search of bargains and profits. Furthermore, Gracchus had given dignity

⁴⁹ Columella, III. 3. Land was doubtless cheaper in 150 B. C., especially since so much colonization had recently taken place then. Some of the Roman land was of course not arable, yet on the whole it included the choicest parts of Italy. The estimate may go for what it is worth. Columella, at any rate, doubles the value when the land is planted with vines.

to the firms by bestowing political privileges upon the class as a whole. Henceforth the economic interests of the firms found a respectable champion in a compact, ennobled body that occupied a definite place in the state's machinery. Within a few years the voice of the knights can be heard favoring the suppression of devastating wars. In the days of Pompey, they even went one step farther. Then they demanded that the Great General be put in charge of the eastern war because they had reason to believe that he favored the forcible annexation of Syria and would be willing to expose it to the tender mercies of the lucrative contract system.

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